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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR EUR/PRA, EUR/WE, PM/ISP AND DRL/IL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: MARR ELAB PREL ELAB PREL IT ITMARR FORCES IN ITALY

SUBJECT: ITALIAN UNIONS BARK, BUT SHOULDN'T BITE, ON

MILITARY TRANSHIPMENTS

REF: A)ROME 842 (NOTAL) B)ROME 810 C)MILAN 133 D)MILAN 142

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SUMMARY

12. (SBU) ITALY'S LABOR UNIONS ARE GETTING A LOT OF PRESS FOR THEIR ROLE IN DISRUPTING TRANSHIPMENT OF U.S. MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND CARGO, BUT THE REAL HEADLINE IS THAT THEY'RE NOT THE MOST OBSTRUCTIVE, OR DANGEROUS, OBSTACLE. ITALIAN LABOR SHOULD EXPRESS ITS OPPOSITION TO U.S. MILITARY PLANNING AND ACTION WITHIN THE ESTABLISHED SYSTEM OF RULES AND BEHAVIOR GOVERNED BY LABOR LAW AND ACCEPTED CONVENTION. UNIONS WILL STAGE SYMBOLIC STRIKES AND REFUSE TO HANDLE U.S. MILITARY CARGO. THEY SHOULDN'T ILLEGALLY BLOCK PORT ENTRANCES OR TRY TO PREVENT CARGO FROM MOVING FROM CAMP DARBY TO THE PORT OF LIVORNO (THOUGH THE LARGEST UNION IS STRETCHING THE LIMITS BY COORDINATING WITH LESS SCRUPULOUS PROTESTORS). LABOR HAS BEEN AVOIDING OUR CALLS, BUT WE WILL CONTINUE TO underscore OUR HOPE THAT THEY WILL AVOID THE KIND OF CONFRONTATIONAL TACTICS THAT COULD LEAD TO VIOLENCE. BY EXTENSION, ITALIAN LABOR SHOULD POSE ONLY SYMBOLIC, MINIMAL DISRUPTIONS TO U.S. MILITARY OPERATIONS FROM BASES IN ITALY IF WE DECIDE TO PURSUE MILITARY ACTION AGAINST IRAQ. OTHER OPPONENTS, ESPECIALLY THOSE DRAWN FROM THE ANTI-GLOBALIZATION MOVEMENT, MAY ATTEMPT MORE CONFRONTATIONAL, DISRUPTIVE ACTIONS (SEPTEL). END SUMMARY

13. (SBU) ITALIAN UNIONS, NEVER SHRINKING VIOLETS, HAVE FIGURED PROMINENTLY OVER THE LAST TWO WEEKS IN PROTESTS AGAINST TRANSHIPMENT OF U.S. MATERIEL AND OTHER MILITARY CARGO IN NORTHERN ITALY. UNIONIZED FREIGHT ENGINEERS REPORTEDLY ALERTED ANTI-WAR PROTESTORS TO IMPENDING CARGO

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CONVOYS FROM SETAF IN VINCENZA, ENABLING THEM TO DELAY SHIPMENTS ON FEBRUARY 21 (REFTELS). UNION OFFICIALS ALSO HAVE ANNOUNCED THEIR MEMBERS WILL NOT HANDLE U.S. MILITARY CARGO IN ITALIAN PORTS, INCLUDING LIVORNO (WHERE VEHICLES, EQUIPMENT, AMMUNITION AND OTHER CARGO CURRENTLY LOCATED AT CAMP DARBY WILL BE LOADED FOR SHIPMENT TO SW ASIA). THE TRADE UNIONISTS' NOISY ACTIVISM COULD SUGGEST THAT ITALIAN UNIONS WOULD BE AT THE CENTER OF ANY AND ALL EFFORTS TO IMPEDE OR BLOCK EQUIPMENT SHIPMENTS OR DISRUPT OPERATIONS ON BASES FROM WHICH U.S. FORCES OPERATE. WE BELIEVE THAT OVERSTATES THE CASE. UNION ANTIWAR ACTIVITY SHOULD POSE ONLY LIMITED PRACTICAL OBSTACLES FOR U.S. MILITARY CARGO SHIPMENTS AND OTHER SUPPORT OPERATIONS.

14. (U) THE POTENTIAL WAR IN IRAQ IS ONLY THE LATEST ISSUE DIVIDING ITALY'S THREE MAJOR LABOR CONFEDERATIONS. THERE IS SUBSTANTIAL OVERLAP BETWEEN THE CONFEDERATIONS' POSITIONS. THEIR DIFFERENCES ARE SUBSTANTIAL ENOUGH, HOWEVER, TO PREVENT THEM FROM PURSUING THE TYPES OF COORDINATED PROTESTS THAT MIGHT REALLY CAUSE PROBLEMS FOR US AND FOR THE BERLUSCONI GOVERNMENT.

15. (SBU) THE TWO LARGEST TRADE UNION CONFEDERATIONS OPPOSE ANY USE OF FORCE IN IRAQ, THOUGH FOR DIFFERENT REASONS. ITALY'S LARGEST (5.4 MILLION MEMBERS), MOST-LEFTIST CONFEDERATION, THE GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF ITALIAN LABOR (CGIL) HAS SHOWN THE MOST FERVOR IN OPPOSING U.S. POLICY AND PREPARATIONS. WITH 75% OF DOCKWORKERS AMONG ITS MEMBERSHIP, IT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT UNION IN THIS CONTEXT. CGIL'S HISTORICALLY CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH ITALY'S COMMUNIST PARTY MAKES MOST OF ITS MEMBERSHIP IDEOLOGICALLY PREDISPOSED TO

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OPPOSE ALMOST ANY USE OF FORCE BY THE U.S. MOREOVER, CGIL HAS THE MOST NAKEDLY POLITICAL OBJECTIVES OF THE THREE CONFEDERATIONS, ESCHEWING DISCUSSIONS AND ANY FORM OF COMPROMISE WITH THE BERLUSCONI GOVERNMENT - ON ANY ISSUE - IN FAVOR OF CONFRONTATION. IN THAT CONTEXT, ITS STRIDENT ANTIWAR POSITION REFLECTS ITS DESIRE TO INFILCT THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE POLITICAL COSTS ON THE BERLUSCONI GOVERNMENT FOR

ITS DECISION TO SUPPORT THE U.S. (COMMENT: IT'S AN APPROACH THAT REFLECTS EX-LEADER COFERATTI'S HOPE TO JOIN EU COMMISSION PRESIDENT PRODI IN A TICKET TO LEAD THE LEFT IN THE NEXT NATIONAL ELECTIONS - AND ONE SHARED BY ITALY'S OPPOSITION MORE BROADLY. POTENTIAL MILITARY ACTION IN IRAQ IS JUST THE LATEST ISSUE BY WHICH THE FRACTIOUS OPPOSITION PARTIES SEEK TO WEAKEN THE BERLUSCONI GOVERNMENT. THE CENTER-LEFT HAS BEEN ABLE TO ALIGN ITSELF WITH A STRONG MAJORITY OF ITALIANS OPPOSING WAR, BUYING IT AT LEAST SOME SHORT-TERM POLITICAL GAINS.)

16. (SBU) THE STRONG CATHOLIC ROOTS OF THE SECOND-LARGEST (4 MILLION) CONFEDERATION, THE ITALIAN CONFEDERATION OF LABOR UNIONS (CISL) PRESAGE ITS STAUNCH ANTIWAR POSITION. AS STRONG "CULTURAL CATHOLICS," ITS MEMBERS AND LEADERSHIP PAY

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ACTION EUR-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AMAD-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	DODE-00	DS-00
	EAP-00	UTED-00	VC-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01
	VCE-00	NSAE-00	PM-00	SP-00	IRM-00	SS-00	TEST-00
	EPAE-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-01	NFAT-00	SAS-00
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R 061352Z MAR 03
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8601
INFO EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMCONSUL NAPLES

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CLOSE ATTENTION TO THE CHURCH'S POSITION ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES, AND THEY OPPOSE CONFLICT - AND CONFLICT IN IRAQ -
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FOR VIRTUALLY ANY REASON (NATO'S ACTION AGAINST THE FRY BEING A NOTABLE EXCEPTION). BUT THE CHURCH'S STRONG EMPHASIS ON ORDER, HIERARCHY AND SOCIAL COMITY MEANS CISL ALSO IS RELUCTANT TO ENGAGE IN CONFRONTATIONAL TACTICS OR ILLEGAL ACTION. (COMMENT: MEMBERS OF THIS CATHOLIC-AFFILIATED UNION NONTHELESS MAY RESORT TO CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE TACTICS DURING ANTI-WAR DEMONSTRATIONS THAT WOULD FOLLOW USE OF FORCE AGAINST IRAQ).

17. (U) BY CONTRAST, THE SMALLEST OF THE THREE CONFEDERATIONS (THOUGH STILL A POTENT SOCIAL FORCE WITH 1.8 MILLION MEMBERS), THE ITALIAN UNION OF LABOR (UIL), REFUSED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ROME PEACE MARCH FEBRUARY 15 FOR FEAR OF DELEGITIMIZING THE UN. THE UIL WAS UNWILLING TO ACCEPT THE OTHER TWO CONFEDERATIONS' ASSERTIONS THAT WAR IS NEVER AN ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVE, ARGUING THAT UNSC-SANCTIONED CONFLICT MIGHT BE UNDESIRABLE BUT WOULD BE LEGITIMATE.

18. (U) REGARDLESS OF THEIR PHILOSOPHICAL POSITIONS ON MILITARY ACTION, ALL THREE CONFEDERATIONS STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF LEGAL ACTION. WHEN THE TRANSHIPMENT ISSUE FIRST BROKE O/A FEBRUARY 21, CGIL AND CISL LEADERS EPIFANI AND PEZZOTA ISSUED A JOINT STATEMENT SUPPORTING TRAIN ENGINEERS WHO DID NOT WISH TO TRANSPORT THE CARGO, ARGUING THE CARGO COULD BE DANGEROUS AND THEREFORE COULD CREATE HAZARDOUS WORKING CONDITIONS FOR THEIR MEMBERS. THEY ASKED THE GOI TO PROMPTLY INFORM WORKERS ABOUT MATERIALS TRANSPORTED. BUT THEY ALSO CALLED ON ALL THEIR MEMBERS ONLY TO PURSUE LEGAL ACTIONS. AT A FEBRUARY 27 RALLY IN LIVORNO, EPIFANI STRESSED THAT THE UNION MEMBERS WOULD REFUSE TO HANDLE U.S. MILITARY CARGO WITHIN THE PORT, AND WOULD STRIKE
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TO AVOID DOING SO. BUT HE ALSO SAID THEY WOULD NOT ATTEMPT TO BLOCK DELIVERY OF U.S. VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT OR JOIN 'DISOBEDIENT' PROTESTORS IN OTHER ACTIONS - PERHAPS WITH AN EYE TO THE FINES AND OTHER PENALTIES THAT COULD BE IMPOSED ON THE FEDERATION FOR VIOLATING ELEMENTS OF ITALIAN LABOR LAW. PEZZOTA AS WELL REPEATEDLY HAS STATED THAT "BOYCOTTS AND RAIL BLOCKADES DON'T ADVANCE THE CAUSE OF PEACE."

¶9. (SBU) THERE IS EVIDENCE OF AT LEAST INFORMAL, LOCAL COORDINATION BETWEEN CGIL MEMBERS AND THE 'DISOBEDIENTS,' MORE MILITANT PROTESTORS, MANY DRAWN FROM THE ANTI-GLOBALIZATION MOVEMENT, WITH FEWER QUALMS ABOUT EMPLOYING CONFRONTATIONAL TACTICS (SEE REFS C AND D). CGIL APPEARS TO HAVE DECIDED TO CONFINE ITS ACTIONS TO WITHIN THE PORT, LEAVING PROTESTS AND OTHER POTENTIALLY DISRUPTIVE MEASURES BETWEEN DARBY AND THE PORT TO THE 'DISOBEDIENTS.'

¶10. (SBU) CGIL'S ACTIONS MAY COMPLICATE THE MILITARY CARGO'S FINAL MOVEMENT FROM SHORE TO SHIP, BUT WE SEE NOTHING TO INDICATE IT (OR THE OTHER ITALIAN UNIONS) ARE CONTEMPLATING MORE AGGRESSIVE, POTENTIALLY VIOLENT ACTION TO PREVENT THE CARGO'S ULTIMATE DEPARTURE. MOREOVER, THE CONFEDERATIONS' STRONG EMPHASIS ON LEGAL ACTION SUGGESTS THAT ANY LABOR ACTIONS ON U.S. BASES (WHERE CGIL IS NOT REPRESENTED) DURING A CONFLICT SHOULD BE LARGELY SYMBOLIC, ALTHOUGH STRIKES OR REFUSAL TO PERFORM CERTAIN TASKS, WHICH COULD POTENTIALLY DISRUPT OPERATIONS, CANNOT BE COMPLETELY RULED OUT. WE WILL REPORT SEPARATELY ON THE GREATER POTENTIAL FOR "NO-GLOBAL" ORGANIZATIONS TO ORGANIZE TO DISRUPT TRANSIT AND USE OF ITALIAN BASES IN EVENT OF ACTUAL HOSTILITIES.

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